

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 672

EA 023 152

AUTHOR Jacob, Jan C.
TITLE Getting and Keeping the Best Administrative Staff:
The Key to School Improvement.
PUB DATE Oct 89
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Joint Annual Meeting of
the Texas Association of School Boards and the Texas
Association of School Administrators (San Antonio,
TX, October 1989).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.)
(120) -- Information Analyses (070) --
Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Characteristics; Administrator
Effectiveness; *Administrator Qualifications;
Administrator Responsibility; Administrator Role;
*Administrator Selection; Change Strategies;
*Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary
Education; Instructional Leadership; *Leadership
Qualities; Management Development; Principals;
*School Administration; School Restructuring

ABSTRACT

Truly effective schools cannot exist without strong instructional leadership. At the base of the school improvement process are certain assumptions related to the role of principals, such as the expectation that school administrators demonstrate skills as both efficient managers and visionary leaders. The task of school reform has become one of expanding the skills and repertoire of practicing administrators while searching for new instructional leaders who already possess the talents required to fill vacancies. Twelve talents or themes that reflect the belief structure and behavioral characteristics of the best administrators include being developers, relators, stimulators, and arrangers. (EJS)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Getting and Keeping the Best Administrative Staff:
The Key to School Improvement

By Jan C. Jacob

ED334672

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Jacob

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the Annual Joint Meeting of the Texas Association
of School Boards and the Texas Association of School Administrators,
San Antonio, TX, October 1989.

EA023 152

Getting and Keeping the Best Administrative Staff:
The Key to School Improvement

By Jan C. Jacob

Since the reports of educational reform commissions and consortia, the Holmes Group, the Carnegie Commission, the National Governors' Association, and the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, national attention has focused on the educational process and the outcomes or lack of outcomes that the system was producing.¹ As a result, the topic of educational reform has been the subject of keynote speeches at national and state education conferences and of countless journal articles during the decade of the 1980s.

Working concurrently with various national commissions and committees were effective schools researchers, Ronald Edmonds, Wilbur Brookover, and Lawrence Lezotte. They identified specific conditions or correlates present in schools identified as effective when measured by gains in student achievement. Among the five to eight conditions consistently evident in the effective schools, strong instructional leadership of the school administrator stands out as one of the conditions without which truly effective schools do not exist.²

¹ Patricia Cloud Duttweiler and Shirley M. Hord, Resources for Administrator Assessment and Staff Development (Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1987), 3.

² Michael Cohen, "Effective Schools: What the Research Says," Today's Education 70 (April-May 1981): 59.

As recently as 1986, the New York State Education Department, in conjunction with Lezotte, launched a massive project within the state of New York consisting of conferences, seminars, and work sessions on the topic of school improvement. One outcome of this project was a discussion of nine basic assumptions that must be present in the educational change process demanded by the reform movement. At the base of the school improvement process are the following assumptions related to the role of the principal:

1. In the future, even more than in the past, all schools will be expected to focus on teaching for learning as their primary mission.
2. School administrators will be expected to demonstrate skills as both efficient managers and as effective visionary leaders.
3. In the future, even more than in the past, schools will be held accountable for measurable results or outcomes.
4. Decision making will be more decentralized as the individual school is recognized as the production center of public education and, therefore, the strategic unit of planned change.
5. Collaboration and staff empowerment must increase if building level staff are going to become meaningfully involved in the planning, problem-solving, and evaluation of their schools' programs.³

³ Lawrence W. Lezotte, "Strategic Assumptions of the Effective Schools Process," *Effective Schools Research Abstracts* (January 1989), 3-10.

When this description of critical tasks is compared to the tasks required of school administrators prior to the reforms, a marked difference is evident. During the 1960s and 1970s campus administrators were forced to spend their time dealing with drugs on campus, outsiders on campus, and disruptions within the classroom.⁴ However, during the 1980s the role of the school administrators became more complex. In addition to the managerial tasks required, the new age principal had to provide coherence to the instructional programs, work with teachers to conceptualize instructional goals, set high academic standards, stay informed of policies and teachers' problems, make frequent classroom visits and provide both diagnostic and prescriptive input to the teacher, create incentives for learning, and create a climate that fostered student learning.⁵ In addition to these tasks, new demands for processes that encourage collaborative decision making⁶, new community and business expectations for schools⁷, and the increased demand for putting together teaching teams within which peer coaching

⁴ Jack McCurdy, The Role of the Principals in Effective Schools: Problems and Solutions (Sacramento, California: Educational News Service, 1983), 12.

⁵ Steven Bossert, et al., "The Instructional Management Role of the Principal," Educational Administration Quarterly 18 (Summer 1982): 37-39.

⁶ John W. Gardner, "The Tasks of Leadership," NASSP Bulletin 72 (October 1988): 77.

⁷ Maran Doggett, "Staff Development: Eight Leadership Behaviors for Principals," NASSP Bulletin 71 (March 1987): 1-8.

occurs⁸ have called for administrative abilities in facilitation and communication strategies as well as teacher selection and development strategies.

Therefore, in this era of educational change when the public is demanding accountability in all areas, particularly in the area of student achievement, the current reform movement has forced the yoke of instructional leadership on the school administrator in spite of limited skills in this area among many. The task then becomes one of expanding the skills repertoire of practicing administrators while searching for new instructional leaders who already possess the talents currently required to fill vacancies when they occur.

Administrative Staff Development

In its Critical Issues Report, the American Association of School Administrators proposed that training of school administrators in the skills and behaviors necessary to be effective leaders "is probably the most neglected aspect of school improvement efforts."⁹ Duttweiler and Hord corroborated the need for administrator staff development by citing "administrator staff development as a catalyst for the whole school improvement movement."¹⁰

If the case has been made that school improvement will be successful only when leadership skills are improved, the connection

⁸ Judy Arin-Krupp, "Using the Power of the Principalship to Motivate Experienced Teachers," The Journal of Staff Development 7 (Fall 1986): 100.

⁹ McCurdy, 74.

¹⁰ Duttweiler and Hord, 3.

between school improvement and personnel improvement can be summed up in the following way.

"School improvement is not a paper process or product. School improvement will not result from a compilation of planned courses of study or other materials, per se. School improvement will not happen because a statement of goals is announced by an administrator or by a Board of Education. School improvement cannot and will not take place unless there are specific behavioral changes in people; and it will not be achieved unless it is a thoroughly planned program with very careful attention to the developmental characteristics of the change processes involved.¹¹

With general agreement that more training is needed if school administrators are going to assume their new role as instructional leaders, identifying the specific types of training surfaces as the next step in the process. Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Council, suggested that the best results from staff development for administrators occurs when there is district-wide unity and a sense of direction for the district as a whole.¹² Therefore, an assessment of perceived needs by those individuals involved in the training is a first step. Growth occurs 90 percent of the time when the need is identified by the individual and only 50 percent of the time when the need is identified by someone

¹¹ Richard C. Wallace, The Role of Staff Development in Long Range Planning for School Improvement (ERIC, ED 251 903, 1982), 31-32.

¹² Dennis Sparks, "Staff Development for School Administrators: An Interview with Gordon Cawelti," The Journal of Staff Development 7 (Fall 1986): 9.

else.¹³ When the administrators involved in the training perceive the need for it and are committed to increasing their skills as administrators, new demands for accountability are less threatening. The school district or organization that truly values its administrators will facilitate growth provoking experiences for its employees.

Once the need is identified and the training is planned, a critical component in effective staff development can be gleaned from the research on effective teacher training. Joyce and Showers identified a three-component model of staff development that includes the presentation of a theory base coupled with demonstration and modeling, application and practice with feedback, and coaching over time. It was the coaching over time that was identified as the factor that influenced the positive changes that occurred in the teaching strategies of the teachers in the study.¹⁴ Therefore, as administrators learn and have time to practice the new strategies, follow-up to the training in the form of study groups, either formal or informal, in which administrators share applications and problem solve among peers, is essential. The skills of the administrators will be developed and/or enhanced to enable them to fulfill their roles as instructional leaders.

¹³Clayton Lavery, "Why Changing Our Own Behavior Seems Difficult," Human Synergistics, Inc., Plymouth, 1987.

¹⁴ Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers, "Improving Inservice Training: The Messages of Research," Educational Leadership 37 (February 1980): 379-85.

As the level of competence in job tasks increases, the administrator's self image is strengthened and his/her level of satisfaction with the job grows. This positive self image and job satisfaction are the ingredients that must be present in order for the administrator to dare to risk implementing new ideas that inevitably separate the average from the superior administrator. Therefore, as the organization invests in administrator training and retraining, the returns to the district are multiplied.

Administrator Selection

Identifying prospective administrators with an existing talent base has been the challenge of many personnel departments. The typical method of selection is based on the resume and perhaps an interview. However, neither of these two methods usually documents the extent to which the administrator has a clear, informed vision of education that focuses on teaching for learning, can establish a school climate that nurtures students and teacher achievement, can facilitate the collaborative spirit that is a must in today's school, or can communicate effectively with parents and include them in the decision-making process at the school level.

During the fall of 1988 and spring of 1989, Selection Research Incorporated,¹⁵ directed by Dr. Donald Clifton, finalized a process that identified the categories of talents found among the best school administrators in the country. This company, which also researches and produces the Gallup Poll, has identified the talent bases that

¹⁵ Selection Research Incorporated, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1989.

are found among the best in the fields of clergy, teachers, salesmen, as well as school executives.

The results of the research conducted by SRI yielded twelve talents or themes that reflect of the belief structure and behavioral characteristics of the best among the administrators. The first theme is commitment. The administrator with this talent or theme is dedicated to the encouragement and development of teachers and students. This administrator has the desire to make a wide-range impact on those with whom he works. The administrator with ego drive, the second theme, claims his role as a leader but is never satisfied with the status quo. Achievement, the next theme, defines the administrator who has a burning inside to do his job better and faster. He is also very optimistic about the future. The developer theme rounds out the first four themes that collectively identify the administrator's motivation to manage. The developer theme is the most critical in this foursome. The administrator with this talent defines himself in terms of others' growth. He is dedicated to making his teachers successful.

Another four themes identify the extent to which the principal relates to and stimulates staff. This set of interpersonal skills is headed by the theme of individualized perception. Principals with the individualized perception talent are attuned to the individual differences of their teachers, and they are comfortable with the idea that each teacher is unique and needs something different from him. The relator theme points to the administrator who is comfortable with his teachers and can laugh at his own mistakes. He makes himself available to his teachers even when personal

problems need to be discussed. The stimulator theme is identified when the administrator has a sense of drama and can liven up almost any event. They have a gift for communicating, and they add to that a sense of humor. The last talent area in this set of four is the theme of team. This principal enjoys getting people to work together more productively. He understands the concept of synergy and uses it to increase productivity

The way in which the principal organizes the school environment is reflected in the last set of four themes. The arranger theme identifies the administrator who makes things work. He anticipates possible barriers and compensates for them before they become barriers. The command theme is manifested in the principal who is willing to be direct, possibly even aggressive, if that behavior will make things happen. The administrator with the discipline theme has structure. He is on time, keeps good records, is organized, and knows just where things are. The last talent in this group is concept. Concept is a measure of everything that is important in the successful work habits of the administrator. If a principal has a high concept theme, he has a set of ideas with which he explains how he manages his school. He measures his accomplishments with performance objectives and has many people who would recommend him for an administrative post.

The researchers at SRI very quickly remind students of this process that very few administrators possess all twelve talents. However, through a set of multiple questions and specific ideas to listen for, a personnel director or a superintendent can quickly

identify those talent areas within each prospective administrator. Obviously, those administrators with the richest talent base or the ones that possess the talents that the administrative team needs to round out its talent profile are the administrators that the district would want to hire.

As the American public becomes more aware that today's students will be the future leaders of the twentieth-first century, new demands will be placed on the public school systems to produce those leaders. Concomitantly emerging with this new awareness are the data that reflect new and complex issues for public schools to address such as increasing numbers of hard-to-educate youth, decreasing numbers of qualified teachers, and increasing needs for public money to address both of these issues. Therefore, while the attack of the problem must be from many different points simultaneously, one way to increase student achievement and success is to place students with the most highly qualified teachers available who sincerely care that each student succeeds. Those teachers must be selected by, supported by, and developed by the most highly qualified administrators who sincerely care that each teacher succeeds in his/her task. These administrators are found in every district in the United States. But left in isolation to grapple with the same types of problems found in virtually every school, the chances to grow, change, and improve will be much more limited. Without effective staff development and collaboration for administrative staff, ultimately the students who will be our future leaders will be retarded in their paths to productive future roles.

VITA

Jan C. Jacob

Jan Jacob is currently serving as Assistant Superintendent for Instruction with the Victoria Independent School District in Victoria, Texas. While completing her doctorate in educational administration at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, she did extensive research in the area of public school administrator effectiveness and designed staff development programs for school administrators. She has trained extensively in effective teaching practices, peer coaching, instructional leadership skills, and group facilitation strategies.

In addition to her current job, Dr. Jacob has served as a classroom teacher, campus administrator, subject area supervisor, regional service center consultant, director of special programs, university instructor, and director of staff development.

Jan Jacob

Victoria Public Schools

P. O. Box 1759

Victoria, Texas 77901

(512) 576-3131